

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1–19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently amended) An applicator for an electrosurgical instrument, comprising:

a gas and high frequency current terminal at a first end of said applicator;

a cutting electrode at a second end of said applicator, opposite said first end;

~~an insulating cap configured to detachably fasten the applicator on a handle of the instrument;~~

a gas and high frequency current supply pipe formed of an electrically conductive material and attached to said cutting electrode, said pipe forming a passage that communicates a gas from said gas and high frequency current terminal to a location proximate to said cutting electrode, said electrically conductive material of said pipe conducting a high frequency current that drives said cutting electrode from said gas and high frequency current terminal to said cutting electrode;

an insulating cap having a cylindrical inner recess configured to detachably fasten the applicator on a handle of the instrument, the insulating cap having an annular protrusion that contacts a portion of the supply pipe to secure the supply pipe to the insulating cap, the insulating cap further having a proximal extension that surrounds the supply pipe, the extension extending away from the annular protrusion toward the second end of the applicator terminating with an inwardly projecting edge;

an insulating casing tube surrounding a portion of the supply pipe and partially within the cap, the tube extending from the annular protrusion of the cap past the inwardly projecting edge of the cap, the tube having a collar on a tube end proximate to the annular protrusion, the tube displaceable along a relative to a common longitudinal axis of the applicator, a path of displacement of the tube end with the collar being only between the annular protrusion of the cap and the

~~inwardly projecting edge of the cap, so that the insulating tube can expose or cover for exposing or covering the cutting electrode, with the casing tube surrounding the gas and high frequency current supply pipe over a longitudinal section, and a collar or an external right angle bend at a distal end of the casing tube; and~~

at least one radially surrounding gas-sealing inhibiting device arranged between an inside of the casing tube and an outside of the gas and high frequency current supply pipe, wherein the inhibiting device allows that a respective position be frictionally fixed at any location of the path of displacement of the casing tube, wherein

~~a path of displacement of said insulating casing tube is defined by a hitting contact of the collar or the external right angle bend on the casing tube with an inwardly projecting edge of a proximal extension of the insulating cap and with a portion for fastening the current supply pipe in the insulating cap, and~~

said inhibiting device is adapted and arranged to prevent leakage of gas ~~an outlet of said gas from said application except at an opening of said casing tube proximal to said cutting electrode.~~

21. (Previously presented) The applicator according to claim 20, wherein the inhibiting device is located in a portion of said proximal extension of the insulating cap.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 20, further comprising a consumption-resistant hollow cylindrical, partially outwardly projecting insert arranged at a proximal outer end of the casing tube.

24. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the current supply pipe includes a radially surrounding groove or a corresponding notch on its outside for accommodating the inhibiting device.

25. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the casing tube includes an inwardly directed, radially surrounding groove or a corresponding notch for accommodating the inhibiting device.

26. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the inhibiting device comprises at least one of an O-ring, a profiled elastic sealing strip, and a closed leaf spring.

27. (Currently amended) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the collar or the external right-angle bend at the distal end of the casing tube effect, in conjunction with [[a]] the cylindrical inner recess of the insulating cap extension, an additional radial and axial guidance for the casing tube.

28. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the collar or the external right-angle bend comprise a groove for accommodating an additional inhibiting device.

29. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 28, wherein the additional inhibiting device includes an elastic sealing ring.

30. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the insulating cap has a shape of a truncated cone, with a cap closing piece being inserted into a hollow cylindrical recess of an upper surface of the truncated cone.

31. (Currently amended) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the cap closing piece forms [[a]] the proximal extension of the insulating cap.

32. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the cap closing piece includes an internal collar at an outer end.

33. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the distal end of the casing tube is guided and retained by the cap closing piece.

34. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 23, wherein the consumption-resistant insert is made of ceramics.

35. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the cutting electrode is attached at a proximal end of an inside of the gas and high frequency current supply pipe.

36. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 35, wherein the cutting electrode comprises a fastening support at its distal end.

37. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 36, wherein the cutting electrode can be adjusted via a fastening support pipe for obtaining a substantially coaxial position relative to the casing tube or a consumption-resistant insert, for achieving an optimal surrounding gas flow in all cases in which the applicator is used.

38. (Previously presented) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the cap closing piece is integrally connected to the hollow cylindrical recess of the cap.

39. (Currently amended) An applicator for an electrosurgical instrument, comprising:

a supply pipe formed of an electrically conductive material having a first and second end;

an electrode attached to said first end of said supply pipe;

an insulating member configured and adapted to surround a longitudinal section of said supply pipe, a first insulating member end extending past said first end of said supply pipe and a second insulating member end opposite said first insulating member end having a collar;

an insulating cap having a cylindrical inner recess surrounding a portion of said supply pipe and a portion of said insulating member, said cap having an annular protrusion in contact with said supply pipe to secure said supply pipe to said insulating cap, an cap end that extends toward

said first end of said supply pipe having an inwardly projecting edge, said cap configured to detachably fasten the applicator on a handle of the instrument; and

a sealing member configured and adapted to provide a seal between an outer circumference of said supply pipe and an inner circumference of said insulating member, wherein

said pipe forming a passage that communicates a gas flow;

said electrically conductive material of said pipe conducts a high frequency current that drives said electrode;

said insulating member is configured and adapted for displacement relative to said supply pipe in the direction of a longitudinal axis of said supply pipe, wherein a path of displacement of said second insulating member end with said collar being only between said annular protrusion of the cap and said inwardly projecting edge of said cap,

said sealing member is configured and adapted to frictionally fix said insulating member relative to said supply pipe,

~~said insulating cap is configured to cooperate with said insulating member to limit said displacement of the insulating member relative to said supply pipe and~~

said sealing member is adapted and arranged to prevent leakage of gas ~~an outlet of said gas flow from said applicator except at an opening of said insulating member proximal to said electrode.~~

40. (Canceled)

41. (Previously presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said insulating member is an insulating tube configured for sliding engagement with an outer circumference of said supply pipe.

42. (Previously presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said seal is a fluid-proof seal.

43. (Canceled)

44. (Previously presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said supply pipe extends through said insulating cap for communicating said gas flow and said high frequency current through said insulating cap.

45-46. (Canceled)

47. (Previously presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said electrode is attached to said supply pipe via an inner surface of said supply pipe.

48-51. (Cancelled)

52. (New) An applicator for an electrosurgical instrument, comprising:

an insulating cap having a cylindrical inner recess, the cap having a first cap end and a second cap end, the second end having an edge that extends into the cylindrical recess;

a supply pipe formed of an electrically conductive material extending through the cap and past the first and second cap ends, the cap having an inwardly annular protrusion that contacts the pipe and secures the pipe within the cylindrical recess of the cap;

an electrode in electrical contact and secured to the supply pipe, the electrode extending away from the supply pipe and the second end of the cap;

a insulating tube surround a portion of the pipe, the tube surround the portion of the pipe that extends from the annular protrusion of the cap past the second cap end, the tube having a outwardly extending collar on an tube end most proximate to the annular protrusion of the cap and within the cylindrical recess of the cap, wherein the tube is displaceable along a longitudinal axis of

the pipe, a path of displacement of the tube end with the collar being only between the annular protrusion of the cap and the inwardly projecting edge of the cap; and

a gas-sealing device completely surrounding a portion of the pipe and in contact with the pipe and the insulating tube, wherein the applicator supplies a gas through the supply pipe to a location proximate to the electrode and applicator supplier electric current through the supply pipe to the electrode.

53. (New) The applicator of claim 52, wherein the tube is displaced to expose or cover the electrode.

54. (New) The applicator of claim 52, wherein the tube is frictionally fixed along any point of the path of displacement.

55. (New) The applicator of claim 52, wherein tube collar contacts the annular protrusion and the inwardly projecting edge of the cap thereby defining the path of displacement.